

President's Message

By Alan G. Brackett, 2022-23 President

Usually, being number 1 at something is a source of tremendous pride, whether in business, academics or sports. But Louisiana has the unfortunate distinction in being number 1 in the percentage of its population living below the poverty level in this country. We're second in the number of children living in poverty and third both in the lowest household median income and highest income inequality. There isn't much to be proud of there. But as we approach the end of another year, the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) has a lot to celebrate.

► We launched the Infinity Fund, established so that despite fluctuations in the economy, every dollar received from IOLTA, CINC funding and legislative appropriations can be directed to our civil legal aid partners to help those Louisiana citizens living in poverty.

► We established the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee to build capacity and identify strategy through research, learn-

ing and analysis of internal protocols and processes, leadership and volunteer engagement practices, and client community advocacy and support of efforts.

► In partnership with Lagniappe Law Lab, we launched the Justice Bus, which will bring civil legal services through virtual self-help tools and physical resources to the public who needs them the most.

► We awarded a Jock Scott Community Partnership Panel grant to support the activation of the Northeast Louisiana Bar Foundation. This organization will establish an organized pro bono project in collaboration with the 4th Judicial District Bar and surrounding areas, which are sorely in need of services to the population in those parishes.



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Even though we have made great strides in our goal to increase grant funding and services in communities statewide, it never seems to be enough. While we're fortunate to grant millions each year, the needs in Louisiana are so much greater than our resources allow. With a current ratio of one civil legal aid attorney for every 11,230 income-eligible people, we simply have to do better. It's vital for the LBF to expand and grow our resources to continue to meet the increasing needs of our neighbors and our partner organizations who support them.

During the holiday season, our personal and professional to-do lists grow exponentially. Please remember to include the LBF on your list this year and join me in donating to serve those in our state who can't protect themselves. The LBF provides an opportunity for everyone in the legal community to play a part in ensuring that every Louisiana citizen has equal access to our justice system. By working together, we can continue to provide civil legal aid to Louisiana's most vulnerable citizens. Make your gift online at www.raisingthebar.org or mail directly to LBF, Ste. 1000, 1615 Poydras St., New Orleans, LA 70112. For more information on how you can participate in the work of the LBF, contact the Development Department at (504)561-1046.

Justice Bus Delivering Civil Legal Resources to Underserved Areas

The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) and the Lagniappe Law Lab (LLL) announce the creation of the Justice Bus. This joint project will bring civil legal services through virtual self-help tools and physical resources to the public who need them the most.

The Justice Bus will travel to civil legal resource deserts, first identified in 2019. These are places more than a 45-minute drive away from a civil legal resource that have limited access to legal services, struggle deeply with poverty, and lack meaningful Internet connectivity. More than 600,000 income-eligible Louisianans (34%) live in these civil legal resource deserts where meaningful legal assistance is simply out of reach.

"The Justice Bus is an incredible tool for local outreach and education in places with limited access to legal services. By

bringing these resources to the public, we can move toward more equal access to legal information in Louisiana," said LBF President Alan G. Brackett.

The completion of the purchase and retrofitting of this bus is expected in the first six to eight months of the upcoming fiscal year. Once completed, the Justice Bus will be "in service" an average of two times per week doing outreach and providing access to online resources. Potential community outreach locations include libraries, schools, dollar/grocery stores and banks.

"This service will allow us to bring cutting-edge technology and a wealth of legal resources to areas that have struggled to access legal services. We are thrilled to work on this project with the Louisiana Bar Foundation," said LLL President Rebecca Holmes.

"The Justice Bus is the second LBF and

LLL collaboration. Our first project was the Louisiana Civil Legal Navigator which improves accessibility, effectiveness and efficiency of legal services in Louisiana by utilizing artificial intelligence. The addition of the Justice Bus will further the delivery of civil legal aid services to those most in need," said LBF Executive Director Donna Cuneo.

"We couldn't be more excited to further our reach in the most remote parts of the state. Over 90% of low-income Americans receive inadequate help when faced with a civil legal issue. There simply aren't enough direct legal services to meet the needs. With the Justice Bus, we'll be able to meet people where they are, connecting them with high-quality legal information, self-help services and referrals for issues that affect them most," said LLL Executive Director Amanda Brown.